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Casino czar to Wynn: Let's talk

Wednesday, February 6, 2013 -- Anonymous (not verified)

Local Coverage ^[1]

Dave Wedge ^[2]

Thursday, February 7, 2013

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Mayor Thomas M. Menino's casino czar has fired off a testy letter to Las Vegas tycoon Steve Wynn, inviting him to open up talks on his proposed Everett casino in a move experts say gives the mayor the option of hedging his bets on Suffolk Downs — or stirring up trouble for the gaming billionaire.

"We would certainly be willing and eager to speak with (Wynn)," Brian Leary, chairman of Menino's hand-picked casino host advisory committee, told the Herald yesterday. "It's unclear, frankly, whether Boston would be a host community or a 'surrounding community.' Either way, the statute requires them to negotiate with us."

Leary's office dispatched the letter Tuesday to Wynn's Vegas attorney, inviting the casino mogul to chat about the project. The one-page letter refutes claims by Wynn that his calls have been ignored, and says a Jan. 25 missive to Menino was "the first known direct contact."

The proposed \$1 billion Everett casino would be located on a 40-acre parcel on the Mystic River waterfront, but land abutting the site is owned by Boston. Also, the road leading to the site is owned by the Hub.

Menino recently made ominous remarks about the road, saying: "You know something? To get into (the site), you have to go through my property."

Experts briefed on the letter, who requested anonymity, said it indicates Menino could be looking to jump into the game with Wynn, in case the state chooses Everett over Suffolk Downs. Or the mayor could be looking to throw a monkey wrench into the Everett plans.

Leary said the city wants to strike an "extremely valuable" deal with Suffolk Downs that could see the Hub net a percentage of casino revenue, a flat annual fee — or both — in addition to other lucrative perks. The accounting firm Ernst & Young has been hired to analyze the project and recommend just how much cash the city should demand.

"This could be a significant, once-in-a-lifetime economic generator for the residents of East Boston and the city of Boston," said Leary, who was born in Eastie. "We want to ensure that the benefits far exceed the burden of hosting a casino."

Suffolk Downs and Wynn officials declined to comment.

Under the state's gaming law, casino developers are required to negotiate with the "host community" — the city or town where the venue will physically be located. The law also requires developers to hash out a pact with "surrounding communities," which Boston likely would be deemed in the Wynn deal.

Surrounding community agreements need to be "feasible and reasonable," under the law. Any disputes would be sorted out by the Massachusetts Gaming Commission.

"If they are unable to come to an agreement, then the commission has the authority to step in," MGC spokeswoman Elaine Driscoll said.

Menino has long favored the East Boston racetrack, which is hoping to build a \$1 billion casino with Caesars International. Suffolk Downs this week filed a required state environmental study in another sign the project is moving ahead full steam.



HIGH STAKES: Boston

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 [LettertoWynn.pdf](#) [6]



Steve Wynn

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